

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-

APR 21 1959

Senatorial Gifts

Senator Thomas J. Dodd's testimonial dinner gifts, former Senator Richard Nixon's expense funds, Senator Ralph Yarborough's radio fund—and other curious devices by which many Senators and Representatives augment their public income by private and often secret gratuities are all of a piece.

In varying degrees of vulnerability they are all open to the objection that they put the office-holders who are paid for serving the whole public under peculiar and special obligations to a select group of citizens. It does not matter whether the members of that select group avail themselves of the opportunity to exert an improper influence. The office-holder who takes his oath to serve the whole people takes money from some of the people.

Campaign contributions are bad enough—and worse when they slop over from the campaign period into private coffers of office seekers. There ought to be some better way of financing expensive campaigns that few office-holders could manage on their own. But at least, custom and tradition have conferred on candidates some immunity to improper pressures by campaign contributors. Sheer numbers add to the protection of the candidate's independence when the campaign contributors are many. The neater, and tidier and smaller and more secret the post-election givers are the more objectionable their contributions. Citizens have a right to be worried about what secret influence is being exerted upon the men they elect.

Congress may not be ready or able to deal with the campaign expenditures. But it ought to be able to forbid by explicit and definite enactment the solicitation or acceptance of other contributions. The statutes now outlaw the giving and taking of money to perform services or support legislation, but they are silent on the legality of taking money where services are not delivered or promised. In effect, they put a premium on concealment. They ought to at least put a premium on disclosure and require the regular publication of any such contributions.